

to-government” relationship it had pledged to follow with respect to Indian tribes.<sup>295</sup> Yet Avent’s concerns were also based in part on her belief that the White House could not legally intervene with Interior. Avent wrote to Ickes: “This is a Department of Interior [matter] . . . and that’s where it should stay.” Avent further informed Ickes, as she did Lindsey, that she would call O’Connor and then “give you an update.” She closed by warning Ickes that the “press is just waiting for this kind of story. We don’t need to give it to them.”

After writing her memo to Ickes, Avent and Michael Schmidt, a Domestic Policy Council senior analyst who worked on Indian gaming issues, together placed a telephone call to O’Connor. Avent told O’Connor that neither she nor her staff could or would meet with him because it was Administration policy to deal only with tribal leaders, not lobbyists, on Indian issues, absent tribal consent. At this point, Avent later recounted, O’Connor became short with her. O’Connor told her that he would bring the Hudson issue to the attention of DNC Chairman Fowler at a meeting later that week on Friday, April 28. He then hung up on her.

After the telephone call to O’Connor, Schmidt sent an e-mail on behalf of Avent to Cheryl Mills, who was an Associate Counsel to the President. In the email, Schmidt related the events of the April 24 conversation with Patrick O’Connor, as well as Avent’s proscriptions about the situation. As Schmidt informed Mills, Avent felt that the White House could not “legally intervene with the Secretary of Interior on this issue.” Accordingly, Avent asked Mills to “[p]lease have Harold [Ickes] call Don Fowler and explain that there are no secrets in Indian Country, that . . . it would be political poison for the President or his staff to be anywhere near

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<sup>295</sup>The “government-to-government” relationship is a term used to express the Clinton Administration’s policy of treating Indian tribes as sovereign nations, not merely as a constituency.